

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTU #0104 0401613
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 091613Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7283
INFO RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 000104

SIPDIS

FOR EEB/CIP AND NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/09/2020
TAGS: [ECPS](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: TUNISIA: COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES MINISTER
SEEKS COOPERATION AND INVESTMENT

Classified by Ambassador Gordon Gray for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[¶1.](#) (SBU) In a February 5 courtesy call by the Ambassador, Minister of Communication Technologies Mohamed Naceur Ammar explained the central role of information and communications technology (ICT) in Tunisia's development strategy. The Minister made a pitch for greater U.S. investment in Tunisia's ICT sector and was pleased to learn details of the imminent visit of a U.S. trade delegation to Tunisia that will include major U.S. ICT firm Motorola. End summary.

Regulating and Promoting the ICT Sector

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Ammar opened with a description of his ministry's activities. The Ministry of Communication Technologies both regulates and promotes information and communication technologies (ICT) in Tunisia. It manages Tunisia's portal to the world wide web through the Tunisian Internet Agency and monitors internet usage through the National Information Security Agency. It manages both the postal system and the national telephone operator, Tunisie Telecom.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) ICT, said Ammar, is an important part of Tunisia's development strategy. Tunisia intends to become an ICT platform for the Mediterranean region by attracting investment, boosting education, and liberalizing the sector. Tunisia's investment code, he said, provides incentives to potential investors, while its education system is linked to a growing number of techno-parks that match research to market needs. Ammar highlighted the recent award of a third telecom license to Divona/Orange as an example of the sector's trend toward liberalization.

[¶4.](#) (SBU) Ammar described Tunisia's efforts to position itself as a leader in ICT on the international stage. It hosted the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), and has since engaged in follow-on activities such as the 2007 "Connect Africa" summit in Kigali, Rwanda. It will host an ICT Forum November 10-11 to evaluate progress on the 2005 WSIS "Tunis Agenda."

Areas for U.S.-Tunisia Cooperation

[¶5.](#) (SBU) In response to the Ambassador's question on how the United States and Tunisia could deepen ICT cooperation, Ammar highlighted the need for business investment in Tunisia's ICT sector. The Ambassador replied that in addition to the U.S. companies already active in the sector, including Microsoft,

Cisco, HP, and IBM, a U.S. trade delegation scheduled for February 15 would include representatives from Motorola. Ammar also suggested other areas of potential U.S.-Tunisian cooperation, including university exchanges and training programs for Tunisian officials at the U.S. Telecommunications Training Institute. The Ambassador replied that these activities could fall under the 2004 U.S.-Tunisia Science and Technology Agreement.

Biographical Note

¶6. (C) Prior to his January 2010 appointment as Minister of Communication Technologies, Ammar functioned largely in academia as Director of the Tunis Higher Communication School, and previously as Director of the Post and Telecommunications Higher School in Tunis. On the internet, his appointment was greeted with some irony among Tunisian dissident bloggers: "Ammar" is the nickname, analogous to "Big Brother," long used by bloggers in referring the Government of Tunisia's wide-ranging internet censorship apparatus, headed by the Ministry of Communications Technologies. Updated biographical information on Ammar will be sent by email to INR/B.

GRAY